

June 17, 2010

Honorable John Conyers  
Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Conyers,

We are writing to you today to express our unified support for your bill, H.R. 5503, the "Securing Protections for the Injured from Limitations on Liability Act" (SPILL Act).

On April 20, 2010, our lives were forever changed when we learned that the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded and killed 11 men. This disaster devastated 11 families, including ours. In our grief we learned that the current federal maritime laws governing who bears responsibility for the wrongful deaths of our loved ones are grossly inadequate and outdated.

The SPILL Act addresses these inadequacies and provides equal justice for all victims of maritime catastrophes. The bill fixes a long-standing dichotomy under current laws that value the lives of those who die at sea far less than those who die on land. Under the Jones Act, family members of the decedent are entitled to pecuniary damages, the loss of future income. Likewise, under the Death on the High Seas Act (DOHSA) only family members who are financially dependant on the decedent may recover damages, and their recovery is limited to the loss of future income. However, DOHSA provides nothing more than a check for funeral expenses to family members who were not financially dependent on the decedent. The SPILL Act amends these laws and allows the recovery of non-pecuniary damages and damages for pre-death pain and suffering. This bill finally recognizes that when someone dies at sea as a result of the fault of another, a real loss is suffered that goes beyond the value of a pay stub or funeral expenses.

No amount of money can compensate us for the loss of our loved ones, but your bill allows for the recovery of more nearly adequate damages when a wrongful death occurs on the high seas. We applaud you and Congressman Charlie Melancon for introducing this important legislation. We urge Congress to act quickly and enact the SPILL Act into law.

Sincerely,

Keith Jones  
Father of Gordon Jones

Michelle Jones  
Wife of Gordon Jones

Chris Jones  
Brother of Gordon Jones

Natalie Roshto  
Wife of Shane Roshto

Denise Arnold  
Mother of Shane Roshto

Rhonda Burkeen  
Wife of Aaron Dale Burkeen

Jacqueline Duncan  
Sister of Wyatt Kemp

Micallette Kemp  
Sister of Wyatt Kemp

cc: Congressman Charlie Melancon  
Congressman Lamar Smith